

PRESENT STATE OF OUR MISSIONARY WORK.

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Read to General Conference, November, 1883.

We are met to deliberate concerning the great, difficult, and honorable work the Lord has committed to our branch of His Church in heathen lands.

It is right that the Conference should have before it the very latest and most exact statement of the force and funds at command, what are the most pressing present needs, and what are the opportunities now before us.

The Force.

The force, as stated in the last annual report, was 18 missionaries—4 in China, 7 in India, and 7 in Japan; and 23 assistant missionaries—5 in China, 7 in India, and 11 in Japan. To these have been added one missionary and one assistant missionary for Japan, the Rev. N. H. Demarest and wife, now on their way to Nagasaki, and one assistant missionary, Miss Mary K. Scudder, now under appointment to India. The Board is also considering the application of the Rev. Howard Harris and his wife, of the Classis of Westchester, and of two young ladies to be sent to Nagasaki. One assistant missionary, Mrs. E. C. Scudder, Jr., of the Arcot Mission, has been removed by death since the report was made.

Help Still Needed.

There still remain to be supplied, to carry out the direction of the General Synod and meet the immediate necessities of the Missions, a missionary family

for the Telugu field in India, and another for the Amoy Mission in China. The need for these men is no less evident and pronounced than when the Synod met in June. It is the unanimous opinion of the missionaries in India that if Dr. Chamberlain is to have help, or if, as seems far more likely, he is compelled to withdraw altogether from the Arcot field, that help or a substitute must come from this country, as those now there have all and more than all they can do in caring for the work among the Tamil people.

The Amoy Mission sends its earnest plea for another man, especially for a physician, to aid in establishing a new station at some point in the interior, perhaps the important town of Sio-ke, at which a hospital and dispensary may be maintained. Nothing, perhaps, that the Church could do for China would have such immediate and blessed results. The faithful brethren, few in number, never more than four for the last ten years, but strong in faith, wise and economical in administration, who have held that field so long, deserve at least this recognition at the hands of the Church, and the great wide, and wide-open, door justly claims it. Prudence also on our part dictates it, for already the working force there is reduced to two men.

To make these additions the Church stands publicly committed, and the Board is directed. If made the entire force would be 22 missionaries and 27 assistant missionaries. Yet far beyond the capacity of even such a force to reach and embrace, are the opportunities afforded by the benighted millions, who are yet, in India and China, accessible to our efforts and are even now waking up to their condition and their needs.

Funds.

What funds are in hand and what are needed? What will it cost to do this work and how much money have we to do it with? To some it may seem unfortunate, as indeed it is sometimes openly *said* to be, that the *money* question enters so largely into the published statements and deliberations of our Missionary Boards and of conferences like this. Yet there is no help for it. Operations such as these cannot be carried on without money, nor properly carried on with-

out enough money. But this, self-evident, is *the very least* that can be said.

It is not only *inevitable* that money should be needed and be sought; it is *most fortunate* and *designed of God*. How else than by the gift of *money*—sanctified, indeed, by the Word of God and prayer, but distinctly by the gift of money, can the very vast majority of Christ's disciples participate in the work of a world's salvation, or obey His high command, "Go, teach all nations?" This, and this only, makes every-one, however poor, however humble, to have a share, according to his desire and ability, in this most blessed work of saving the souls of the heathen, and building up the enduring kingdom of Christ. Thus may he make his influence felt on the other side of the globe. In this view, as has been most justly and tersely said, "It is a high honor and privilege to be entrusted by so great a potentate as the King of Kings with the distribution even of 10 cents."

The Cost.

The appropriations for the current year were, as has been frequently published, a little less than \$69,500 (\$69,416.82):

For the Amoy Mission.....	\$11,477 73
" Arcot " 	25,752 00
" Japan " 	26,687 09
For Home Expenses.....	5,500 00
Or a total of.....	<u>\$69,416 82</u>

In this amount, however, is not included the increased cost of any additions to our missionary force, such as have in part been made and are in part in contemplation. For these not less than \$10,000 must be added, making the sum needed for the year but little less than \$80,000.

There are, also, and there doubtless will always be other wants to be met. The chapels so earnestly asked for and so greatly needed in China ought to be built. The Board cannot long delay to provide dwellings for the new missionaries at Nagasaki, and a habitation for at least one of the schools there to be established. Something like a reasonable margin is desirable, therefore, to the sum already named, and \$5,000 would not be too much.

Receipts.

If we turn now to the receipts, we find the entire amount for the six months, from May 1st, to be \$25,897.51. But of this sum \$2,500 are by special donation of the Woman's Board, to be devoted to the enlargement of the Ferris Seminary, and \$1,250 by direction of the donors to be invested. This leaves, available for the general purposes of the Board, but \$22,147.51. There are yet to be gathered, therefore, in the half year that remains, \$58,000 nearly, if the sum of \$80,000 is to be obtained.

Grave Situation.

The Board cannot disguise from itself, nor would it conceal from the Conference or the Church, the gravity of the situation in which it is placed, and the work committed to it. At the same time it can conscientiously claim that it has not placed itself there, nor rashly run into peril before it was sent. Both in its annual report and in all its published appeals and statements, it has faithfully endeavored to put the Church in possession of all the facts in the case, and all the knowledge needed for a wise decision. The decision is well known. It brings us here to-day. Even in view of the showing that has been made, the Board does not deprecate it, but rejoices in it, in the assured conviction that the Church is able, and the earnest hope that she will show herself willing to make it effective. Yet \$80,000 is \$12,000 more than the average for the last five years, and nearly \$15,000 more than last year's receipts. And more than this. If raised this year, and the work put on the footing that has been proposed, the gifts of the Church cannot henceforth be suffered to fall much below this amount. In other words, a great effort must be made, and that effort maintained henceforth, from year to year.

Methods.

With no desire to trench upon the province of any of the speakers or papers soon to come before you, it seems proper to say here and now, with the utmost emphasis, that the Board does not believe that such a sustained effort can be made and maintained under our present system. That system can only be *relied* upon to bring disappointment and disaster. It con-

sists, for the greater part of our contributing churches, in the attempt, by a single collection once a year, to discharge their responsibility in this matter. That the Church has with it done so much in years past, is a matter for wonder and gratitude to God. That it has been unable to rise permanently, by means of it, above the level indicated is no wonder at all.

Defects.

Such a method of supply must, in the very nature of the case, be fitful and inadequate, depending as it does upon so many favoring or unfavorable conditions, whether the day be fine or stormy, whether the attendance be large or small, whether certain individual wealthy or interested and benevolent givers are present or absent, whether the subject is presented in detail and with earnestness, or coldly, and by title or announcement merely. Such a system is inefficient, unequal, dangerous, and incapable of expansion. *Inefficient*, in that it probably fails to secure anything at all from a large majority of the members of our churches; *unequal* in its operation, in that it usually leaves two-thirds or more of the amount required, to be gathered in the last four or five months of the year, since the churches are supposed to be fuller at that time, and in a better position for such work; *dangerous* in that it invariably and inevitably necessitates the borrowing of several, sometimes many, thousand dollars during the summer months, to meet the regularly recurring drafts, to be repaid from the assumed larger receipts of the winter months. If those larger receipts fail, debt is the only possible result. Nor is such a system capable of regular and healthy expansion to meet the growing wants of a healthy work. A special effort may be put forth, under special pressure of appeal or necessity. But the advance is a *spasm*, and the gifts drop back the next year to a point as low as before or even lower. Whoever will scan the table of receipts of the last twenty-five years, as presented in the last annual report of the Board, will see how this process of oscillation has recurred over and over again; as *e. g.*, from \$56,000 (1866), to \$63,000 in 1867, and *back* the next year to \$53,000; from \$53,000 in 1868 to \$81,000 in 1869, and *back* to \$57,000 in 1870; from \$65,000, 1872, to \$33,000, 1873, and *back* to \$55,000; and

from \$63,000 in 1880 to \$92,000 in 1881, and *back* to \$58,000. The insufficiency, inequality, and danger of debt attending such a system cannot be too distinctly apprehended, nor can they be better illustrated than by the experience of this very year, 1883. It opened with a debt at the bank of \$21,000, caused by the small receipts of the previous summer. Of this sum, \$16,000 were paid off, and the whole, doubtless, would have been had not every Sabbath in January and February proved stormy, and the receipts from collections in these months fallen \$4,500 behind those of the year before. But the same causes have been in operation since. It has been necessary to borrow \$17,000 to meet the expenses of the first six months of this fiscal year, and the Board stands to-day indebted to the bank for \$22,000, for which its security fund is pledged. How easily such a state of things may be avoided is shown by this little incident. In writing upon another matter to the Treasurer of the American Board in March, the Secretary expressed the hope that the storms of January and February had not interfered as seriously with the receipts of that Board as with our own. His reply was significant. "Stormy Sundays do not trouble us much. The system of weekly offerings has so far pervaded our churches that a rainy Sunday makes little difference in our receipts."

Men Lost or Discouraged.

Nor are these the only evils attending such a system. The Board and the Church are to-day deprived of the services of an excellent teacher, thoroughly qualified by long experience, who had offered himself for labor in Japan, but could not, from the necessity of his position, await the decision of the question of the ability or inability of the Board to send him. Over and over again applicants have been kept in suspense for months from this cause alone.

No doubt an *overflowing* treasury may be as much of an evil as a good, perhaps more. It is well to have prudence and economy in administration, and carefulness in the selection of missionaries, *enforced* upon the Board by the necessities, as well as enjoined upon it by the proprieties of the case. But a *steadily growing* treasury is a *necessity* of successful work. When there is work that presses to be done, and there are

men evidently qualified and apparently moved and called of God to do it, ready and offering themselves to go and do it, *ought* not those who represent the Church in this matter to be able to say, "Yes, we will send you. True, we have not the funds in hand. Our usual income will not suffice. But we know the Church has both the ability and the willingness to make the necessary addition to her gifts."

That such a state of things is as easily possible as it is desirable, we fully believe, if such methods can be here suggested and matured as shall command the hearty assent and coöperation of the ministers and elders here assembled, and then, through the particular Conferences, directed by the Synod to be held, presented to and accepted by the churches. If such shall be the result of our gathering, a yet brighter day will dawn for our Missions, already bright with the blessing of God vouchsafed to them.

To this end the freest discussion is invited and desired, not only of the papers to be presented, which have been prepared, as hardly need be said, without the dictation or influence of the Board or its officers, but also of the work of the Board in any of its aspects. There is no disposition to conceal anything and nothing to conceal. And, on the other hand, questions may be asked and suggestions made here which will be of great value to the Board and the work.

But not only does the Board freely and cordially invite and welcome the discussion of the work by those who are here present. It rejoices in the opportunity to thus throw upon those who, as pastors and elders and members of the churches, must after all *do the work*, something of the perplexities, serious questionings and weighty responsibilities that press constantly upon the members and officers of the Board.

Dear brethren, the successful prosecution of this most blessed work, the inauguration of sufficient methods and the attaining of worthy and adequate results depends almost entirely, under God, upon you and those associated with you in the ministry and eldership of our churches. To you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, to lead His people on and up to higher walks of privilege and service. We read in

the Old Testament how, when the Lord would bring the children of Israel through the flood of Jordan to the conquest and possession of the land of promise and of hope, he sent the priests forward first, bearing the Ark of the Covenant, in which was the Word of God. And it came to pass that as soon as the feet of the priests that bare the Ark were dipped in the brim of the water, the river parted, a way was made and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground. So shall it be with us, no doubt, if those who bear the Word, if not the Ark, of God before His people shall truly *lead* them on. The flood of difficulties, of even apparent impossibilities, shall divide, and the Lord's people, treading on firm ground, shall enter on a better era, a higher level of feeling and activity, of greater rewards and richer than ever before in the service of their God. Surely, if we are willing here to say, in all humility and sincerity: Lord, what shall we do? we shall not fail to find the work and the way to do it.